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ABSTRACT

Women of Chinese descent living in Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand were interviewed to provide educators in bilingual and multicultural education with insights that will help them to better prepare young women of ethnic minority backgrounds for adjustment to United States society. Additional descriptive data were gathered from written sources. A brief historical perspective is given in order to provide a context within which to view this description. Three approaches are used to present the data. Where possible, the present situation is compared to the past. Indigenous Southeast Asian populations are compared with more recent Chinese immigrant populations. In addition, quotations from interviews and profiles of two of the interviewed women are presented. The data and analysis indicate that in some respects Chinese women act as agents for perpetuating tradition: in other respects they act as a force for change. (Author/MK)

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THE CHINESE WOMAN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, CHANGING ROLES---CHANGING LIFE STYLES

by

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ABSTRACT

Data for this study were gathered from personal interviews with women of Chinese ancestry in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. Women in each of the following areas were interviewed: elementary and secondary school teachers, university faculty, business and professional women (i.e., insurance agents, bank executives, and accountants), librarians, women working in or around temples and other religious institutions, and homemakers. Additional data were gathered from written sources.

In order that the reader may acquire a clearer understanding of the contemporary Chinese woman in Southeast Asia the authors give a brief historical perspective which provides a context within which to view this subject. Secondly, the authors have utilized three approaches in presenting the data: where possible they have compared and contrasted the past with the present; in addition they have compared indigenous Southeast Asian populations with the more recent Chinese immigrant populations; lastly, they have utilized excripts, quotes, and profiles of Chinese women interviewed in December of 1976 and January of 1977. These approaches were designed to provide the reader with a prescription and flavor for the contemporary life of Chinese women living in Southeast Asia.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years Americans' views towards immigrants, minorities, and women have fluctuated. In recent years interest has developed in studying minorities and women, and in analyizing their changing life styles. Perhaps it would be helpful to American educators to view the experience of an immigrant Chinese minority female population in another part of the world as a basis to view the challenges in this country.

By viewing the Chinese woman's experience in Southeast Asia American educators in bilingual and multicultural education can acquire insights into women's struggles which appear to be mutual across national boundaries. By studying women in other parts of the world American educators can acquire understandings which will enable them to better prepare young women of minority ethnic backgrounds as they adjust to the complex urban-industrial society of the United States.

It is increasingly apparent, that if American schools are to truly be successful, they must build on the strengths which children bring with them--on ancestral pride, on native language, and on the multiplicity of needs and identities which the community of the child affords. These factors may well support the notion of nurturing mother tongues and cultural diversity. Educators need to acquire the ability of furthering understanding and respect for one another among persons who experience different origins and points of view.

As a phenomenon in American life, cultural diversity has helped shape educational policies and practices as well as educational beliefs

for a number of generations of Americans. Proponents of bilingual and multicultural education have asked educators to recognize that cultural diversity exists, that it is legitimate, and that an education that discounts the value of cultural diversity is itself not legitimate.

The purpose of this paper is to help teachers, educational researchers, evaluators, administrators, and counselors to acquire such understanding that they will become aware of the need to rid educational programs of sex role and ethnic group stereotyping; recognize the need for attitudinal and behavioral change in ones own ethnic and sex role stereotyping; and develop a commitment to encourage changes which will enhance multicultural bilingual education curriculums.

Minority women are not the only ones who stand to profit from reforms in our educational system. Women from the dominant society and men may also become sensitive to another culture and hence be better able to understand and interact with the different people around them. In the following paper this educational promise will be developed by providing background and historical information essential to the complex subject of Chinese women adapting to a new society. The subject is many facated and will focus on identity, socialization factors, assimilation and acculturation factors, legal status and language.

The attempt herein is to provide a broad stroke profile, with some basic information for educators, program administrators, and the general public to use as a beginning point. The scope of work, hopefully, may serve as a stimulus to pique the intellect of those involved in multicultural and bilingual education projects to begin the development of curriculum

which is adequately balanced in its female and male content. Public education is, and always has been, inseperable from broader social, political, and economic goals.

Southeast Asian women share with every group perplexing diversity and heterogeneity. Certain historical elements relevant to the development of the ethnic Chinese woman in Southeast Asia will be selected for treatment in this work. In considering these, one must remember that Southeast Asian women share multitudinous histories, vast differences in lifestyles, experiences and realities. They do, however share some basic roots in the development of Chinese culture and history in Southeast Asia.

Historically, Southeast Asia was viewed as the land of promise by numerous immigrants from many regions of China. Chinese immigrants to Southeast Asia, as immigrants to America, did not cease being what they were and did not, except in rather superficial ways, become something different when they were naturalized as citizens of their new Southeast Asian country. In most cases a bicultural style developed which enabled ethnic identities to coexist and influence each other slowly over time.

Historical Perspective

The "high colonial" period, 1870-1940, saw the heaviest immigration of Chinese into Southeast Asia. They came primarily from south China provinces, representing several language groups: Hokkien from the Amoy region, Cantonese from Kwantung Provence, Teochiu from the Swatow region, Hakka from north Kwantung and south Hunan and Kiangsi provinces, and Hainanese or Hailam from Hainan Island. The Hokkienese made their way to the Philippines, Indochina, Java and Malacca. The Cantonese went to west Malaysia and Cambodia, where they dominated the restaurant trade and became famous as cooks. The Hakkas originally migrated within China to the south and from Kwantung province to Southeast Asia, where many of them entered mining. The Hainanese were late emigrants and entered Singapore and other parts of Malaya as domestic servents, restaurant and hotel workers. The Teochiu migrated from Swatow to Thailand, Sumatra and Cambodia and are today more numerous in Bangkok than in Swatow (Heidhues, 1974). The geographic concentration of Chinese immigrants by place of origin suggests that emigration was connected with family, clan and village ties, although many coolies were recruited independent of family ties for menial labor.

Southeast Asian variants on life and society at home in China were numerous. In Southeast Asia the Chinese immigrants eschewed life on the land and turned to urban occupations. Many of them had been farmers at home, but their aim in emigrating to Southeast Asia was not to recreate a duplicate of peasant life in China. They had emigrated in search of wealth, to escape poverty. Their goal was to make money, then return to China to enhance the wealth and status of the family they had left behind.

Another factor in this pattern of activity was determined by the denial of landowning rights to the Chinese immigrants. In the early nineteenth century most Nanyang Chinese lived and worked in port cities, and today they remain also more urban than rural. Immigrants from China in the early nineteenth century were male; when they married, unless they were very wealthy and could afford to bring wives from China, they chose local wives. Their children, the local-born Chinese, were therefore of mixed blood. Chinese communities evolved in interaction with local cultures and societies, whether Malay, Thai, Indian or Indonesian. In many areas the Chinese intermarried and developed hybrid communities: the Babas of Malacca and Penang, the Lukjins of Thailand, the Peranakans of Indonesia, and the Mestizos of the Philippines. Influence of the Chinese tradition dissipated gradually not only because of distance and the passage of time over generations but also because of the influence of other social structures and value systems. Women as well as men were affected by this interaction. In some cases Southeast Asian patterns reinforced Chinese partilineal structures of male dominance, in other cases, as in Thailand and Malaysia, local systems modified the Chinese patrilineal structure.

Immigration of Chinese Women

Until the early twentieth century and even later the Chinese population of Southeast Asia was predominantly male. Women came in smaller numbers at first, accelerating their number in the 'twenties and especially the 'thirties.

The disproportionate sex ration among Southeast Asian Chinese was in part the result of government policy in China. Before the 1911 revolution

there were penalties imposed on any emigration, though this did not prevent it. In the twentieth century the government made little effort to prevent the emigration of males, but it took great precautions to prevent the emigration of women. In Hainan, for example, it was not until the late 'twenties that women were allowed to leave at all. Furthermore, as previously mentioned the intention of male emigrants was to make money as fast as possible and return to China to enhance the wealth and status of their families. They did not therefore take their wives, even when they were married. Males who were abducted involuntarily to Southeast Asia as coolies had no chance to take anyone with them, and many were single. A combination of factors thus combined to produce a Chinese population which was primarily male, without wives or family.

A glance at the population statistics reveals the discrepancy between male and female populations among the Nanyang Chinese. In 1823 there were in Malaya only 361 women to 2,956 males, or 1 in 8. In 1850 there were still only 2,239 women to 25,749 males, which meant a more disparate ration of 1 to 12 (Purcell, 1967). In Singapore in 1836 there were 7,229 females to 22,755 males (Purcell, 1967). Figures from Thailand indicate the same pattern, and as late as 1919 there were only 266 females for every 1,000 males (Coughlin, 1960).

The ill-balanced sex ratio among Chinese immigrants led to the importation of girls and women to be prostitutes. Brothels were allowed in Malaya and Siam until well into the 20th century, and Chinese girls were permitted to enter those countries for the purpose of becoming prostitutes. Impoverished families in China sent their daughters overseas as an alternative to starvation.

Many of the female immigrants entered the new country as mui tsai, employees not in receipt of regular wages, and not at liberty to leave their employers voluntarily. Traded by their families for the price of their ship fare or for a payment, these females were virtually slaves of those who accompanied them overseas. Not until 1937 was the status of mui tsai abolished in Malaya (Purcell, 1965).

Nearly all female immigrants were illiterate. The towns they entered were dominated by male laborers, and the work to be found there was male-oriented. Lacking experience in work outside the home, they were thrown abruptly into male societies with no skills to market. Many mui tsai were forced to become prostitutes by their "employers"; others entered brothels due to the lack of other salaried work for females. Secret society members preyed on many, demanding protection money or selling them into prostitution. Uneducated, with no relatives to protect them, large numbers of unmarried girls and women succumbed to these parasites.

By 1947, the male/female ratio of Chinese in Malaya had remarkably improved, due partly to the immigration of Chinese females, many of them Cantonese. Thailand's Chinese immigrant population also continued to have a disproportionate sex ratio; in 1947, only 157,386 of the Chinese alien population of 476, 582 were females (Coughlin, 1960). Hence, only within the last three decades has the sex ratio fully normalized, a result of natural increase and of a decline in the numbers of Chinese immigrants to Southeast Asia.

The immigration of Chinese women as wives or mui tsai and the off-spring of Chinese immigrants by Southeast Asian women increased significantly the population of Chinese women. Imagine Min's mother

currently in her seventies, arriving in Kuala Lampur, Malaysia from the densely populated region of Canton in 1925. As a young girl she had been sent for by a rich Chinese merchant to become his third wife. This position relegated her to the status of a servent to the first wife and a subposition to that of wife number two. Her children were expected to afford wife number one the title and status of "mother." Her mission in life was to please her husband and to perform such childrearing and other domestic chores as were needed. She was expected to be subservient, docile and dependent. She was illiterate and uneducated. It is little wonder that this woman, finding herself in a foreign land, unfamiliar with the customs, the language, having no educational or vocational skills chose to focus her identity and energies upon the family unit, clinging to the traditional Chinese language, religious beliefs, and customs.

Min related stories of her mother visiting mediums or fortune tellers in an effort to cope with life's stresses and frustrations. Min utilized this latter point to emphasize the fatalistic and deterministic values which her mother held. It was a common belief among such women that life was predestined and one possessed little power to influence or determine one's own destiny. Min reported that her father exercised eminent authority and control over the family.

The plight of Southeast Asian women has changed dramatically. The purpose of this vignette is to provide the reader with a perspective from which to view the current struggle of women in Southeast Asia for identity, equality, and a positive self image.

IDENTITY IN TRANSITION: FORCES FOR CHANGE

Identity is the sum of those values, feelings, and cultural behavior patterns that one learns and adopts. It is the condition of being oneself and not another (Stein, 1967). Southeast Asia, like America, experiences a rich variety of cultural variables as is evidenced by the diverse and varied human social behavior of her inhabitants. As the British brought their afternoon tea and western industrialization to Southeast Asia the Chinese brought their pragmatic view of life, merchant skills, and sense of duty.

Whenever a people move from one culture to another, from one way of life to another, there are problems of adjustment and identity. While cultures can be described as having basic components which include language, socialization patterns, ethics (religion), diet, and costuming, each cultural group manifests these elements in ways which are unique.

Chinese women in Southeast Asia preserve their identity in various ways and in varying degrees, some consciously and others less so. Most respondents were three or four generations from China. One obvious thread of continuity is through speaking Chinese at home, which most women do even in the third generation in Malaysia and Thailand. This does always mean literacy in Chinese in the third generation, since generally the educational level of women does not allow literacy in more than one language.

In Malaysia and Thailand it is questionable how much longer language can continue to function as a vehicle of Chinese cultural continuity, since in Malaysia the vernacular in the schools is now Malay and in Thailand it is Thai. In both countries the pressures to use the national language are strong and the utility of Chinese is decreasing correspondingly. In Malaysia

teachers in Chinese schools are resisting the substitution of Malay for Chinese, but such resistance is increasingly futile.

In Singapore there is similar governmental pressure to use English in preference to Chinese, and those who advocate continuing the use of the Chinese language are referred to as "Chinese chauvinists" by government officials. The language issue in the election of December 1976 was highly charged, in part because the question of diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China had not been resolved by the government.

In Thailand marrying within the Chinese community is one means of maintaining an identity which is otherwise being dissipated. This adherence to a Chinese identity in Thailand is far commoner among lower socio-economic groups than among the middle class, since the elite is obviously Thai, and upper-class ethnic Chinese do not wish to be identified as Chinese or part-Chinese. Thai identity is associated with high status or upward mobility.

Most respondents had a different image of Chinese-educated as opposed to English-educated girls. Chinese-educated girls were viewed as more traditional, old fashioned and less social. Those with English educations were seen as more modern, Westernized and outgoing, as well as enterprising. Women with higher educations who are from the upper brackets socially and economically do not necessarily marry within the Chinese community. In Singapore several successful women interviewed had married Indians. Chinese-Malay marriages are rare in Singapore as in Malaysia. However, in Malaysia upper-class Chinese women also occasionally marry other Asians or Westerners (Hassan, 1974).

Young women today marry by choice rather than through traditional-style matchmakers using horoscopes. One young girl with a high school education noted, "Granny told me not to marry because I was born in the year of the tiger and my boyfriend was born in the year of the ox, this is a bad combination according to those who believe in the old Chinese calendar." She added that her mother didn't care when her boyfriend was born and that her own decision would not be affected by her grandmother's concern.

Most women of Chinese ancestry in unskilled and service occupations do retain a strong family orientation. Nearly all middle-aged women interviewed were married and reported their close friends were also married. The only exceptions were the older amahs.

In all three countries, particularly Malaysia, filial piety was a conscious priority value. Most single women who live at home or even away from home contribute part of their salaries, often as much as half, to their parents. Yet many single women said they planned to continue to work after marriage, that they did not wish to remain at home.

No matter how independent a girl is economically, her parents generally know her fiance and approve her marriage. Even though the marriage is by free choice of both parties, some traditional forms continue to be observed. In Malaysia, for example, the boys' parents visit the girls' parents to formalize the engagement. Most parents prohibit the couple from living together until the customary marriage takes place. Civil marriage is less circumscribed by traditional sanctions. One vestige of Chinese tradition is that it is still common to register a customary marriage only after the birth of the first baby. Exchange of gifts is another formality of customary

Chinese marriage still observed. Very often the exchange of gifts is accompanied by hard bargaining, especially if both families are well-to-do. The most common vestige of traditional marriage, even when the marriage is civil, however, is the serving of ritual tea by the bride, first to the groom's parents, then to her own following the marriage ceremony. The bride traditionally kneels during this tea ceremony, which is symbolic of her entry into her husband's family.

The Chinese woman in Southease Asia had to learn a new language, acquire new customs and socialization patterns, and adjust to different ethics in the form of new mores and laws. Elements as basic as food and clothing were of varieties which were different from the food and clothing with which she was familiar. As is evident, one culture is distinguished from another by viewing the manner in which the basic components of culture cited above are manifested. Merging two or more cultures is indeed a challenge and results in what some call a "dual identity."

Dual Identity: Chinese and Southeast Asian Cultural Elements

Southeast Asian ethnic Chinese have in many respects a dual identity, as both Chinese and local residents and citizens. Which identity takes precedence has varied with nation, generation, age group and political pressures. With younger age groups the pull of the Chinese homeland is extremely tenuous. Many third-generation Chinese in Thailand, for example, when asked what part of China their grandparents came from, replied only "south China" and were unable to be more specific. They are men and women who have never seen China and have no intention of ever doing so.

Singapore has recognized neither nationalist China nor the People's Republic, and the question of recognition or identification with either remains for Singapore an especially politically sensitive and highly charged issue. Thailand and Malaysia have recognized the People's Republic of China and at the same time Malaysia has intensified its Bumiputra policy.

The Chinese woman's self image includes a view of self as frugal, hard working, adaptable, and talented in business and trade ventures. Her religious heritage includes the Confucian ethic as a way of life, many of the gods and festivals of Toaist origin, and the Mahayana form of Buddhism.

The use of roots and herbs such as "ginseng" for medicinal purposes is common. The Chinese collar is still worn by some Chinese women, however, western dress is common throughout Southeast Asia. Many Chinese women have Christian names, but a person with a Christian name is not necessarily an adherent of Christianity.

Both the Southeast Asian and Chinese cultures are emerging as significant influences in the lives of Chinese woman. A considerable problem for the Chinese woman in her struggle for identity is the natural desire not to give up what is familiar, what is comfortable, and what is known. A deep tradition of language, religion, and customs, many of which are viewed as both desirable and valuable intensifies the stress.

One respondent in Singapore stated she did not believe it fair to try to make her children Chinese artificially, since society is changing. She had attempted to inculcate a certain "rational distribution" of Chinese values and customs. Her own children continue to observe the tea ceremony at New Years. In part the observance of Chinese

New Year closes down all normal activity, as does the New Year in January. Indian New Year and all other festivals are observed without regard to Chinese origin or tradition. Very little religious significance is attached to the observance of the Chinese New Year.

Another festival almost universally celebrated in all three areas is Ching Ming, the annual visit to the family grave to offer prayers and food to the souls of the dead. One respondent regarded this festival as "most important." Another stated, "We observe Ching Ming as a cultural phenomenon, not a religious festival. I doubt that my daughter will continue it." Often the observance of Ching Ming takes on the character of a family picnic. In terms of continuity of the Chinese patriarchal family, the maintenance of ancestral tablets in the home and Ching Ming are of special significance. Some Christians, including Catholics, continue to observe Ching Ming. One interviewee noted that worship of the ancestral tablets could not be performed symbolically because it would lack sincerity. "Respect," she noted, "is different from worship." Some respondents expressed doubt that their children would continue to observe Ching Ming; others reported that their children accompany them and will probably continue the custom.

As a major component of culture, religion in Southeast Asia represents a barometer by which one can view both the complex cultural forces with which the Chinese woman must cope and the adaptations she has made in her effort to resolve the dual identity issue and enhance her identity and quality of life. While it cannot be argued that religion is a dynamic force for change it can be argued that it is influential in such areas as preserving the traditional Chinese culture; that women play a significant role in maintaining the religious traditions and activities; and that both its practices and influence have and are changing rapidly.

Southeast Asia is truly cosmopolitan with respect to religion. That is, many different religions - Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam - all co-exist in apparent harmony. It is not uncommon to find among the Chinese population adherents to each of these religions with the exception of Islam. Indeed, members of a single family may adhere to different religious notions. For example, in an interview with Mrs. Lau in Singapore, she indicated that during the festival of Ching Ming both she, a Christian, and her sister, a Buddhist-Taoist, together visit the grave of their mother. Her sister prepares offerings, which include a silver paper boat which signified money for the deceased mother, meatballs with bamboo shoots and two other of her mother's favorite dishes. Mrs. Lau's sister burns joss sticks and offers prayers and food at the alter. Mrs. Lau brings flowers and offers Christian prayers. Both sisters, together, pay respect to their mother during Ching Ming.

Mrs. Koh, an articulate, well groomed woman in her early fifties who regards herself as a practicing Buddhist, explained that populations of Chinese living in Singapore, Malaysia. and Thailand cannot be strictly classified as Buddhists, Taoists, or Confucists in the same way that Western religious history seems to lend itself to a relatively clear distinction among religious groups, i.e. Protestants, Catholics, Jews, etc. She explained that about 74% of the population of Singapore is Chinese, with Malaysia having a Chinese population of about 38% and Thailand approximately 4% to 8%. 60% to 70% of the Chinese women in these areas practice a religion based upon a blend of Buddhist teachings, Confucian ethics, and Taoist beliefs; other Chinese women having become Catholics, Methodists, members of the Church of England, or members of other Christian denominations.

She pointed out that most of the religions in Southeast Asia other than Christian, do not have regular services and, therefore, do not provide weekly social functions. Rather, people go on an individual basis. Among the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, one may easily be misled by the existence of numerous temples and shrines to believe that the Chinese are extremely sectarian and religious.

In terms of shaping the self image of Chinese woman, religion like other traditional customs is undergoing rapid change. Historically and traditionally, Chinese women have experienced a major responsibility for carrying on the rituals and activities of religious life. Some changes in recent years can be noted in this as one sees an emergence of a more shared responsibility between men and women, particularly within the educated classes. Religion no longer has the power and effect of maintaining the traditional family-centered, male oriented, customs and beliefs. While religious beliefs continue to play a significant role in the lives of women, they do so more as a code of ethics for moral behavior than as a vehicle for establishing and maintaining one's identity.

While the Malay Peninsula was a British colony Christian missionaries came to the area in significant numbers. They were well organized in spreading their religious doctrines via individual contact and in establishing schools and services designed to meet the needs of youngsters. Mrs. Koh indicated that the Christians were better organized than the Buddhists-Taoists, and they provided children with religious material both oral and written in the form of stories, songs and books which children could understand. Also. because until 1957 Malaysia was a British colony the children learned to speak English in both public and parochial schools. The Buddhist and Taoist priests and monks, however, spoke only Chinese and, therefore could not

communicate directly with the children. Thus, Christian missionaries had a significant effect on traditional Chinese customs and religious practices which in turn affected greatly the family and ancestor-venerating value system of the traditional Chinese woman.

An interview with Ming yielded the following, "My brothers, sisters and I have all become Christians. I believe there is definitely a trend towards Christianity within the Chinese community in Southeast Asia, particularly in Singapore. I feel that mission schools, such as the one I attended, had higher academic status than government schools." She also viewed Christians as being very active and well organized in Malaysia and Singapore. She reinforced the notion that the Buddhist priests did not speak English and people who are in their twenties and thirties spoke English as children and could not communicate with the Buddhist and Taoist priests. Therefore, her generation was greatly influenced by Christianity. She also noted that there was a lack of literature on Buddhism that was appropriate for children. By contrast, the Christian Bible stories for children and hymns were quite popular with children in Southeast Asia.

Ming concluded, "Traditionally Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism do not exclude or restrict their adherents from exploring other religious values." To a large extent this is seen as explaining why there is little conflict based upon religious practices or precepts. Both Islam and Christianity are more exclusive.

In some instances, however, concern was expressed. One respondant communicated, "I am concerned that the women of my generation do not know the Chinese traditional religious customs well enough to pass them on. I feel my own children do not have enough information about the festivals and

and religious holidays to be able to carry them on with the traditional meaning. Older Chinese women were more bound by tradition than we have been. The younger generation may participate in religious festivities, but they do not know the religious significance of the festivals."

The dilemma of today's Chinese woman is clearly evident, as her role is changing and she begins to embody the notion of personal growth and development much of what has been her historical tradition must change. She finds herself loving, working and playing in a multitude of social groups, each of which provides a powerful socializing influence. As a result, new vehicles for identity development are emerging. She is no longer content with her traditional Confucian role of obedient daughter, obedient wife, and obedient mother. Thus, today, the lot of women such as Min's grandmother is vastly changed.

Socialization Factors: Forces Affecting Identity and Change

Identity conflicts and struggles for women in Southeast Asia are the product not only of the immigration to a new land with different religious customs and mores but are also the product of a rapidly changing socio-economic climate. New patterns and opportunities are emerging which enable them to find a satisfying identity.

Until very recently the status and positive self image of a Chinese woman was dependent upon her ability to give birth to male offspring. A measure taken recently in Singapore includes a family planning program with its primary aim to curb population (Shoon, 1976). This policy has had far-reaching consequences. As Mrs. Teo said, "with the implementation of the population policy, no longer does a woman have to spend her most productive

years producing baby after baby until neither her health nor the family budget can cope with the strain; no longer does she have to be shackled to the home." Now she can, if she chooses, become a co-breadwinner and partner in marriage, in the full sense of the word, besides being able to enjoy a measure of economic independence.

A woman's ability to join the work force was further assisted by the government's program of building creches (child care centers) to serve working mothers in all major housing estates. Thus, Singapore women have been freed from the bondage of too many children. Abortion and sterilization are legal. Easy access to less drastic forms of contraception makes the national ideal of a two-child family no longer a dream (Shoon, 1976).

In fact, the government has strong incentives for limiting families to no more than two children. In Singapore the government provides support in terms of education, health benefits and other social services for only two children in a family. Should a family decide to have a third child, this becomes a very expensive decision in that the family needs to provide for all school, health and other social expenses. Thus, it is not economically sound nor feasible, in most cases, for women to have more than two children.

Jenny, a respondant, said she had no desire to have more than the two children she has, nor did any of her female friends want to have more than two children. These emerging values and policies can be viewed as freeing women to pursue other forms of growth and identity.

Factors related to urbanization also contributed to new socialization patterns. Rural people exerted social control over members of the community. In the city, however, such social control over members of the community was usually not possible, for most urban dwellers do not know their neighbors

well. Control over the actions of individuals thus shifted from social to legal forms for migrants to the city.

Those who moved to the city found themselves living and working among people with a variety of attitudes, beliefs, and norms. For rural females who migrate alone to the city, the psychological effects of entering an environment in which they had fewer social restrictions was especially pronounced. Confined to the home more than men to do housework and take care of children in the family, they experienced a greater gain in freedom than men by going to the city alone. Moreover, they escaped restrictions on their sexual freedom by migrating to the city, where they could more easily live without fear of others' discovering their activities.

Even when women live in urban areas with their families, however, they cnanot help but experience urban normlessness. Contact with a variety of people occurs in school, at work, in social organizations, among neighbors, or while shopping. Urban parents may impose restrictions on their daughter's sexual freedom or friends, but they cannot prevent her exposure to various types of people.

The life of the individual is compartmentalized in the city. Parents cannot know all of their daughter's friends at school nor all of her colleagues at work. They may not know what she does during her leisure time away from home. Furthermore, the home activities of children cannot be controlled when both parents work away from home--an increasing trend among urban families.

The loosening of restrictions imposed by urban parents on their children goes hand in hand with an increased dependence of the latter on peer groups to provide norms and values. Winning the friendship of others their age becomes more important than obeying the admonitions of their parents. Rather

than overtly disregard the authority of parents, children may use the compartmentalization of their lives in the city to keep their peer group activities a secret from their parents.

Children accept new ideas brought on by rapid economic and social change. Values and beliefs different from those of their parents are easily acquired. Through movies, magazines, books, and newspapers they learn about people in other countries as well. Parents also are exposed to new ways of thinking, but experience and an established mode of behavior prevent them from accepting changes as easily. Thus, a cultural gap arises between children and their elders, widening as the pace of social change increases.

Singaporean youth especially feel this gap, for in the past decade economic and social change there has been great. Younger people mix with others of different ethnic groups, and accept interracial marraige as well as interracial dating more extensively than do their parents. The youth often consider their parents' attitudes toward sex and arranged marriage old-fashioned. As with their activities, children often hide their thoughts from their elders. Their awareness of this cultural gap in thinking, however, reinforces association with peer groups, with whom they can be more open.

The gap between the old and young also widens when children attend a school at which subjects are taught in a language different from that of their parents. Communication problems within the home continue to exist particularly among Chinese living in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. Many children have attended Malay and English schools, and have been taught to think in those languages. While they can communicate easily with their parents on an emotional level, they have difficulty in expressing themselves in Chinese on an intellectual level. This communication gap also reinforces association with

peer groups, with whom thy can communicate more easily.

Parents of families living in high-density housing areas tend to discourage their children from leaving the house less often than those who live in more spacious housing. By leaving the house, children relieve the social tension created by large numbers of people in a small area. This temporary solution to the problems of living in a small, crowded flat also reduces the parents' knowledge of their children's activities. A "street environment" thus may appear in high-density housing areas (Mitchell, 1976).

Urban housing also encourages nuclear family living. Most urban flats are too small for grandparents, uncles, aunts, or other kin to live with parents and their children. Unless kin live in the neighborhood, urban parents cannot ask for their help in supervising children. The movement of Singaporean families from private housing to the public housing development flats has contributed to the breakdown of extended family living, and consequently many working parents have difficulty in supervising their children.

With increasing affluence and the great variety of goods available in the cities, urban dwellers become more materialistic. The rapid upgrading of the standard of living experienced by many urban dwellers has an especially strong impact on children. Their elders, remembering more spartan lifestyles, appreciate their increased affluence and accept greater expenditures on material goods with caution. Children, however, regard these increasing expenditures as a normal consumption pattern. Furthermore, competition with others in acquiring material goods becomes especially fierce among children. Their elders may take pride in the family's accomplishments, a fat bank account, or the upgrading of their lifestyles, but children depend primarily on material goods as their status symbols among others their age.

Girls show these status symbols through their appearance. As they enter their teens, they compete with other girls for popularity by spending money on clothing, hairdos, makeup, and fingernail polish. These status symbols are much more important to the urban girl than to the rural girl. Whereas the latter is assigned a status according to the attributes of her family, the former is assigned a status according to her personal attributes, since her peer group often has no association with her family. If the urban girl's family does not give her enough money to spend for these status symbols, she may seek other means of getting money.

Urban life presents another type of status symbol that older girls desire--the financial independence of many urban women. These female role models do not exist among village people. They became more noticeable among urban dwellers in Southeast Asia as women moved increasingly into salaried jobs and as their age of marriage increased. In societies where women have always been considered subservient to men, these sophisticated, independent women who answer to no man are envied and even idolized by many girls. For them, earning enough money to become financially independent is considered a desirable goal prior to marriage.

While desiring financial independence, however, many girls do not intend to abandon responsibility to their parents as the latter grow older. Filial peity as expressed by caring for one's parents in their old age apparently remains a virtue that younger Southeast Asians, especially Chinese, wish to uphold. Thus, many young women are willing to accept the financial burden of their parents after achieving independence.

To attain status symbols, become financially independent, or support their parents, young women must find jobs which pay sufficient earnings.

But when they lack skills or a high level of education, the jobs open to them often do not pay enough to meet these goals. Factory jobs, domestic work, and clerical and sales positions in Southeast Asian countries pay low wages which increase minimally over an extended length of time.

Southeast Asian females face frustration of their goals in seeking salaried jobs to a greater extent than do males. Less often qualified than males for high-salaried jobs due to a lack of skills or sufficient education, they "tend to be concentrated in a relatively small range of occupations and are confined to relatively low levels of skills" (Wong, 1975). Even when working at the same types of jobs as males, the earnings of females are considerably lower (Wong, 1975). Discrimination in recruitment, educational and training opportunities, and promotion prevents even skilled females from attaining jobs open to their male counterparts. Moreover, many men feel such discrimination to be justified, and prejudice against accepting female superiors in working situations continues to exist (Wong, 1975).

Assimilation, Acculturation, and Chinese Associations

The political and cultural position of the Chinese has varied from one part of Southeast Asia to another and from one decade to another. In some places they have been under pressure to assimilate, as for example in Thailand and the Philippines, while in other areas they have been urged to re-sinicize, as in Sumatra and prewar Malaya. In recent Malaysia, they are under pressure to assimilate with Malays linguistically and culturally, under the thrust of the Bumiputra policy.

In cases of intermarriage with local residents, if the father is Chinese the Chinese influence continues longer than if the mother is Chinese, "except

in personal manners and the way of education," in the opinion of one scholar of Chinese in the Philippines (Felix, 1969). The exception noted, however, is of particular significance, since education in the home through the mother has been a major means for preservation of Chinese language.

The urban concentration of Nanyang Chinese communities is another factor in the continuity of the Chinese tradition. Those Chinese who dispersed out into the rural areas and who did not attend Chinese schools took no more than one generation to become thoroughly assimilated (Amyot, 1972). That most Chinese immigrants became urbanized in Southeast Asia bespeaks their power of acculturation as well as the resilience of their tradition. On the one hand becoming urban residents meant a considerable adjustment away from their Chinese homes where they had face-to-face relationships with the whole village to the relative impersonality of the city, a foreign city at that. Yet once in urban Southeast Asia they recreated Chinese society in the sense that they formed surname, geographic and dialect organizations which took on some of the functions of the family and village in China and served to preserve aspects of the heritage.

While it is not strictly true that there were no women in regional and dialect associations, they were certainly predominantly male. The few women who did belong were older, the wives of prominent menbers, but they did not assume active roles in running the associations. The officers were always men. In Thailand there were a number of benevolent associations organized to collect funds for various causes (Coughlin, 1960). Rarely did a woman figure on the lists of large contributors to these organizations, another proof that among the Thai, Chinese men control family finances and dispense charity. In religious associations, on the other hand, membership was

predominantly female, for as previously discussed religion was a sphere reserved almost wholly to the immigrant generation of women.

The Legal Status of Women

In most of Southeast Asia ethnic Chinese women have suffered various legal disabilities, reflecting not so much the status of women in traditional China as legal and customary arrangements in Southeast Asian nations. In some ways colonial regimes instituted practices which gave women in Southeast Asia advantages over their sisters in China. In other respects, however, colonial regimes deprived local women of advantages they had enjoyed traditionally, for example in landholding in rural Malaya. The deprivation under British colonial rule was, nevertheless, more a matter of fact than of legal principle.

British law as applied in Malaya recognized the custom of polygamy but gave secondary wives rights to own property, whereas in China wives, including even the first wife, could claim maintenance only. In the case of secondary marriage, however, it was essential that intent of marriage be established for both husband and wife in order for the legal status of the union to be recognized. The primary legal disability of secondary wives arose in case of divorce, since the wife could be repudiated at the whim of the husband, who could then claim he never intended marriage, even though there were children. In this event the wife could not secure maintenance even though she might bring her case to court. The department of Chinese Affairs played the role of arbitration court in prewar Singapore and Malaya when marital and other disputes were brought before it. The department could draw up documents of separation by mutual consent, as could lawyers as well.

In Singapore the Women's Charter of 1961 safeguards the rights of women with respect to marriage by enforcing monogamy and outlawing polygamy. It also grants married women the right to maintenance for themselves and for their children. Similarly in Malaysia polygamy is in the process of being outlawed with the exception of those who practice the Muslim faith. A Muslim male is allowed four wives, provided he can economically support such an arrangement and treats them all equally.

Mrs. Chen, from Kuala Lampur, in commenting on this issue stated, "While my mother may have been content to be one of several wives, today, if the Chinese woman is in a position to be self-supporting, she will not entertain a second wife in the household. If a man should wish to have a mistress, the relationship must be kept outside of the household. Women today believe one-man one-wife."

Marriage for the contemporary Chinese woman in Southease Asia no longer represents a link between two corporate or family groups. The new marriage is for the most part viewed as a matter concerning only the bridal couple. The forms of marriage have proliferated, and various versions and combinations of traditional and modern ceremonies make it difficult to arrive at any general statement of essentials for Chinese marriage at the present time. Mrs. Lang, an interviewee, related the following in regard to her wedding: "For my own wedding I had met and known my husband before we were engaged; however, we had to go through the formality of a middle man who asked my father for permission." She indicated that they had a traditional engagement, with the cakes and all the other amenities. The wedding was also a traditional Chinese wedding which included a big banquet dinner. Mrs. Lang and her husband did

not take all the traditional rituals surrounding their marriage seriously and participated in the rituals only in order to please their parents. Mrs. Lang now has a son and a daughter but does not feel that they will go through the formality of a traditional wedding as she did.

Few restrictions or social sanctions exist which would prohibit inter-faith marriages with Christians, however, Mrs. Chen noted that, "one seldom finds a Chinese woman marrying a Muslim, due to the tenet of Islam which calls for the marriage partner to convert to the Islamic faith."

Currently, in Singapore, compulsory education laws for both sexes are having a very positive effect on women and their role within Singaporean society. Illiteracy has been one of the barriers which has limited the ability of women to become self sufficient and financially independent. Historically, most Chinese women were not formally educated. While significant progress in this area has been made in the past twenty-five years, there is still much illiteracy, particularly among older women.

However, for the young Singaporean today many view females as having an advantage over males in that they do not have to spend two and a half years in military service upon graduation from high school. One interviewee indicated that more girls are enrolled at the university at a younger age because they may enroll immediately following high school graduation. Girls are therefore available to assume professional positions after completing their university studies at a younger age today than are men. There is evidence that some males are beginning to resent this situation.

In Malaysia and Thailand illiteracy rates are much higher among women than in Singapore. This is due to the fact that where compulsary education laws exist within these countries they are not rigidly enforced. Perhaps

also becuase the Chinese population is in the minority in these countries and, as mentioned earlier, they place a higher value on education than do most other Southeast Asians.

By 1950 more than 700,000 Chinese children in the Federated Malay Stated attended its 1,340 Chinese schools, of which 1,085 were run by the Chinese community (Amyot, 1972). Nonetheless, fewer than one-third of the entire Chinese community at that time were literate. Chinese groups continue to raise mon y for independent Chinese schools in Southeast Asia as a resistance to total acculturation.

An interviewee of Chinese ancestry indicated that while the Chinese view themselves as more capable in academic areas, in many business areas, and more competent in professional areas than the indignous Malay, they are very much aware that they must not alienate the Malay government which has developed Bumiputra policies in recent years. In Malaysia only a Malay may hold certain government positions; when scholarships are given, a certain number must automatically go to the Malays; and 65% of the student body at the University of Malaysia must be Malay. These are some of the concessions the Malay government has instituted in order to upgrade the economic and social status of the Malay in his own country. It is interesting to note that despite these concessions and restrictions, Chinese women, as well as, Chinese men are participating in higher education in Malaysia in significant numbers.

In Thailand the Chinese have had to become Thai in order to be successful professionally or economically. They changed their names and submerged their Chinese traditions. However, since the student riots in October of 1973, many changes have occurred. These changes may also be due

to the fact that Thailand has recognized the People's Republic of China. Since the recognition of China, more Chinese is spoken in Thailand than before; one sees more Chinese newspapers and more Thai-Chinese travel to China. At one time, for example, in Bangkok Chinese characters were not used in outdoor advertising in establishments owned by Chinese. Recently, however, Chinese characters on sign boards outside business establishments owned by Chinese are readily visible.

According to Mrs. T. who lives in Kuala Lumpur, regardless of the barriers one encounters by being Chinese in Malaysia, the Chinese choose to be Chinese. That is, they do not submerge their Chinese identity and become Malay as they might do in becoming Thai in Thailand. In fact, in Malaysia the Chinese exhibit a resistance to integrating with the Malay.

Language: A Force in Identity

If one can view language as a vehicle of identity then certain factors must be considered. In Singapore while English is the administrative language and Malay is the national language, the four languages of English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil are all recognized as official languages.

It is compulsory to teach the mother tongue in public schools in Singapore, whether it be Tamil, Chinese, Malay or English. Among language scholars Singapore is often cited as one of the few places in the world which has effectively implemented bilingual education (Pines, 1977).

A number of different dialects of Chinese are spoken throughout Southeast Asia. As mentioned previously one can hear a Hokkien dialect, Cantonese as is spoken in Hong Kong, Teochiu, Shanghainese, Hainanese, Hakka, Foo-Chow and Mandarin. These various dialects of Chinese are not mutually intelligible,

therefore Mandarin, considered the standard Chinese language, is usually the Chinese dialect taught in public schools throughout Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand.

In Singapore all government notices are in four languages, locally produced T.V. programs are in four languages, and other news media are available in all four languages. However, due to the fact that many of the T.V. programs shown in Singapore are purchased in the United States or Britain, a larger number of T.V. programs are in English.

The English-educated Chinese appear to be the most concerned with the retention of the Chinese mother tongue. According to some women, this has been manifested in their support of opposition party candidates against the People's Action Party (PAP) currently in power in Singapore. It is official policy of the PAP to give all four languages equal status and not to enhance the status of Chinese alone. The Chinese press has been much more supportive of this view than has the English speaking press, according to Mrs. Yee. In other words, there is a fear on the part of those Chinese who no longer retain their Chinese dialect of the loss of the Chinese language and culture within Singapore. Chinese who have continued to maintain their Chinese dialect and traditional customs seem to be less concerned with the loss of the Chinese language and cultural traditions.

Mrs. Yee's feeling is that in Singapore no particular language or culture is emphasized over another. She continued, "when a government appeals to nationalism by ethnicity or language, conflict is inevitable. Singapore is striving for a multicultural society rather than an acculturated society. The Chinese woman living in Singapore sees herself first as a Singaporean, than as an Asian, and thirdly as Chinese." She believes that Singapore is

not attempting to create a new culture but rather is creating a multicultural society through which a Singaporean culture is emerging in which women play a vital role. She sees the Singaporean woman as happy, real, accomodating and recognizing the importance of a smile.

In Malaysia the situation is somewhat different. At the time Sue, a woman living in Kuala Lumpur, was attending primary school the medium of instruction in Malaysia was English. However, after 1957 when Malaysia gained its independence from Britain efforts to develop a national language for the purpose of national identity and unity began. The seventies are currently considered to be a period of transition in this regard. During this transition period, education has been bilingual, half in Malay and half in English. However, all education up to form six will be in Malay after 1978. English as a second language is required, and students may add Mandarin or Tamil if they wish a third or fourth language. In Kuala Lumpur most Chinese speak English. Currently all Malay citizens' children must attend schools under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education of Malaysia. Many Chinese have great concern about teaching subjects only in Bahasa Malay for fear that their children will not get the quality of education that they had been receiving when instruction was in English. Nor do they feel their children will be equipped to be successful should they decide to study abroad, either in Great Britain or in the United States.

Perhaps, another basis for this concern is that very few scientific works have been translated into the Malay language. These concerns are not to be interpreted as a Chinese nationalistic movement within Malaysia, but rather as a legitimate concern for quality of life issues. For example, it is

feared that medical care in the future will not be as good because doctors will not be as well trained, nor will Malaysia produce the scientists that are needed to develop the country or the agricultural experts to assist in making the land as productive as possible.

Teachers now, particularly those training for secondary schools, in form three through form six must be fluent in the Bahasa Malay language. A university instructor expressed the feeling that students at the university this year are not experiencing difficulty with Bahasa Malay. Most of them write better Bahasa Malay than the teachers at the university, for the current university teachers have an English-language education and have only recently had to acquire the Bahasa Malay language. At the present time all faculty members must take courses in Malay if they do not already know the language. They have three years to acquire Malay and then they must pass both oral and written exams in Bahasa Malay. There is intensive language instruction provided for the faculty during the university vacation periods. Kim's feeling is that at the present time the university is changing linguistically much faster than is required by law.

Kim agrees that the country needs some unifying; but, she feels the concern of Chinese parents is that the graduates of the future will lack academic preparation and will not be as qualified for jobs and professional positions as were graduates in the past. She also expressed the feeling that Chinese women are taking a much more active role in the education of their children. For example, she said, "my mother didn't know what I was doing in school and, therefore, could not help me. However, today women are educated and are very much interested in how and what their children are being taught. That is why we are concerned with

the language issue in Malaysia."

Generational differences among Chinese women are not limited to their religious and family roles. Language too is an indicator of how rapidly change is occurring. Visits with older Chinese women reveal that those in their seventies or eighties rarely speak a language other than Chinese. By contrast, a third generation Southeast Asian Chinese woman, typically in her twenties or thirties, may have some knowledge of a Chinese dialect but be fluent in English or Thai. She has also experienced a formal education and is preparing to enter what have been historically male-dominated professions and businesses.

The recent development of mass communication systems, the move toward urbanization and later industrialization has brought to Southeast Asia new concepts, values, and awareness. Modern transportation systems have changed not only the business climate and basic economic support systems but have also brought opportunities for education and cultural exchange. The influence of Western thought, particularly via missionaries and businessmen is not small.

In other words, new sources of validation for self worth and identity have been sought through experiences such as education, travel, economic self-sufficiency, a concern for the world community of mankind, and an identity based on one's profession or job status.

These new sources of identity are based on the premise of self-determination, personal responsibility, and the perception that through one's own initiative and effort a better life can be achieved. There is a rejection of the historic deterministic notion that one is born with specific identity or status from which there is no escape.

As was indicated earlier, the majority of Chinese women immigrated to Southease Asia during the first half of the century. Due to governmental restrictions, both in China and Southeast Asia, this immigration has today slowed to a trickle. Thus, the identity problems due to adjusting to a new country have dissipated to those of second, third and sometimes fourth generation concerns. This is not to suggest that there are not existing problems but to provide the reader with a perspective with which to view them.

Heather, a twenty-five year old interviewee, stated that developing an identity and a positive self image are of critical importance to herself and her peers. She went on to say, "How women are viewed depends very much on how women view and treat themselves. For example, those women who view themselves as having the ability to learn have acquired a formal education; those women who view themselves as having the ability to make decisions and go into business are doing so and are meeting with success. Those women who view themselves as being contributing members of society either as government officials or leaders in labor organizations have met with success in those areas. Today in Singapore a woman must discriminate against herself before others tend to discriminate against her." Heather's feeling is that if you are successful, you are respected, whether as a mother, a vendor, an educator or a business woman.

In order to give the reader a deeper insight into the lifestyles, feelings, and identity concerns of contemporary ethnic Chinese women in Southeast Asia let us turn to the following profiles.

PROFILES

Profile I - Professional Woman, Singapore

Upon arriving at Wei's home, the visitor removes shoes and places them on the shoe rack located just outside the front door. This is one of the traditional customs which continues in contemporary Southeast Asia. Wei is a very attractive, well groomed, warm and friendly young-looking woman of forty. She is articulate and open, willing to discuss a variety of issues particularly as they affect her personal life and struggle for identity.

Wei's grandfather arrived in Singapore from Shanghai via Hong Kong in 1922. He left China during the Ch'ing Dynasty for fear of being kidnapped or having members of his family kidnapped. "Grandfather was a very rich, very intelligent man with many titles. He had 5 wives and 10 children." The children worked in various businesses which he controlled. In those days girls did not inherit, but were given only a dowry. "All of grandfather's wives had bound feet."

Chinese such as Wei who are descendants of people born in Malacca, Singapore or Penang are referred to as Straightsborn Chinese. They speak a language which is different from Malay often called Baba Malay.

Wei indicated that she felt she had come from a semi-traditional Chinese family. The family had been of the Taoist, Buddhist, Confucian religious orientation. They believed in various gods and practiced ancestor worship, adhered to Buddhist principles, and followed the teachings of Confucius which prescribed obedience to father, husband and eldest son.

Wei still practices many of the traditional Buddhist and Confucius principles. She prays to Kuan-Yin and is a vegetarian. She does not

consult spirit mediums, though her mother and domestic help consulted them regularly. Wei feels that mediums are often incorrect and can cause one a great deal of anxiety.

The family was involved in a clan fight; the quarrel was between her grandfather and the Chou family. Grandfather vowed to Buddha by killing a cock, that none of his descendants would ever marry a Chou. Wei's sister married a Chou. While Wei's sister was not disowned by the family she has not fared well economically.

Wei indicated that identity and religious values and attitudes within her family began to change as soon as the grandfather on her father's side of the family arrived in Singapore. He demonstrated a change in his traditional attitude when he sent Wei's father to study in England. Thus, when father's children were born, his family attitudes were no longer solely traditional Chinese attitudes.

In Wei's family there are two sisters and one brother; Wei is the youngest. Though the youngest she was the child selected by her father to study in London. Had her father followed the Chinese tradition, he would have sent his oldest son. The son, however, did not do as well as Wei in school so her father selected the child he viewed as the brightest to study in England. Wei communicated that this was a considerable change in attitude on the part of her father, a notable change from the traditional Chinese family. By this act father abandoned some very basic Chinese precepts.

While in London Wei studied law and accounting. Upon her return from London, she obtained a position as a business executive in Sinagpore.

Wei's feeling is that Singapore is a very cosmopolitan city composed of many different immigrant groups. She feels that the Women's Charter has been

a great boost for women. As a result of the charter, women have equal pay for equal work, and to a great extent this is fully implemented. Part of the private sector of business still prefers men to women. Hower, 39% plus of the Singapore work force is comprised of women. The majority of women are in unskilled or semiskilled positions. A small percentage, possibly 3-4%, are in high management positions similar to hers.

Wei indicated that since 1945 girls have been educated; parents have sacrificed and saved to educate their children, including girls. Wei had two children of her own.

When discussing her career as it related to her roles as wife and mother, Wei noted that if the children had not been doing well and had demanded her presence, she would have had to resign her career or work only part time in order to meet their needs. However, as her children and home responsibilities ran smoothly, she was able to continue with her career. She mentioned that nannys are still present in Singapore and she had one for her children. However, servants are becoming harder to find. Therefore, the need for more creches (child care centers) has emerged and more are being developed.

Wei had the opportunity to visit Communist China in 1973 for a month. In Shanghai she felt she had nothing in common with the Chinese there. "They do not understand the outside world. They did not know what I was talking about in many instances. They made statements to me such as, 'I want to liberate you.' That made me very uncomfortable." Some of the Chinese were studying the English language. "I was afraid all the time," she said. Her feeling was that the Mainland Chinese treat the Japanese and Africans the best, next foreigners such as Americans, and then the Southeast Asia Chinese, with Hong Kong Chinese being treated the worst. Her feeling

was, "perhaps older Chinese women in Southeast Asia might be more patriotic towards Mainland China and less critical."

There is no identification with Taiwan either. In some instances when Wei has been in Shanghai, Hong Kong or Taiwan, she has found the Chinese she speaks is different from the Chinese which is spoken in those areas. She identifies as a Chinese from Southeast Asia. She feels she has a higher standard of living and does not have much in common with the Chinese in other areas.

Wei said that Chinese women have worked very hard and do retain some belief in the Confucian principle that if one has a hard life, one must not complain, but perform her duty and smile. She feels women can be even more effective than men in management because they have more tact, are more aware and sensitive to other people's feelings, and therefore are more effective in interacting with people. "Men sometimes are not as sensitive to other people's feelings and can be very abrupt." Her experience has been that her clients admire her becuase she does a good job. She finds her clients, especially men, more able to trust women in professional positions as they find women who do a good job. She did admit, however, that some employers still have the attitude that women will resign to have a family or get married more often than men.

In conclusion, Wei feels that the role of women has changed considerably in her lifetime. She finds women of today open to new experiences, acquiring talents and skills which will allow them more freedom and give them the opportunity to be productive, not only within the home but also outside the home. Wei is quite happy with her life, feels that she and her husband share many of life's responsibilities. Because she is a professional woman and

has financial independence, she will not have to put up with the kind of life her grandmother had, referring in particular to the idea of more than one wife in the home.

Profile 2 - Teacher, Malaysia

Sue, 32 years of age, is a second generation Chinese. Her father came to Malaysia from Canton in the 1930's to work on a rubber plantation. Her mother is Hakka and retains the Buddhist-Taoist-Confucian traditions. "The religious influence in the family came from mother. She had an alter in the home and prayed to Kuan-Yin." Sue's mother prays with joss sticks on traditional Chinese festivals such as Chinese New Year and Ching Ming.

As Sue was growing up the family participated in the feast of the Hungry Ghosts, popularly referred to as All Souls Day. It is one of the most important and most widely observed festivals in Southeast Asia, particularly in Malaysia. These Hungry Ghosts fall into the category of the neglected who have not been cared for by their living relatives and who are, therefore, prone to be malignant and mischievous. Sue's family continues to leave food on the table for the hungry ghosts.

Sue indicated that Chinese young people today do not observe ancestor worship very rigorously. "In fact, they do not really participate much in religion at all except when they get into trouble, then they go to the Taoist temple. When not in trouble, they simply do not bother with religion. However, women usually visit the temple at least once a year to see the medium in order to have a better idea of what will happen during the year."

Though a Christian, Sue within her dual identity continues the practice of ancestor worship and visits the graves of grandparents on the anniversary

of their death. Ancestor worship in her view is for the purpose of looking after parents and grandparents when they grow old and paying respect to them after their death. In Sue's family all the children contribute to her parents' care; her brothers contribute a larger portion because their income is greater. At the present time a sister lives with the parents and takes care of them.

The Moon Festival was one Sue feels today's young people "can't be bothered with," particularly since men have landed on the moon. She also indicated that many of today's young people do not care about following the teachings of Confucius. People pray to whomever they think will help them.

She attended a Malay Methodist school where she learned English. She is fluent in both Malay and English and is also able to understand Cantonese and Hakka, but speaks them poorly.

There were eight children in the family, three boys and five girls. The children feared their parents, especially their father who was a harsh disciplinarian.

In Sue's educational experience, she related that after finishing form five, she could not go on to form six, which is equivalent to a U.S. two year junior college, due to parental objection. Her parents felt that higher education was not for girls. However, she did later enroll in Penang Teacher's College and upon graduation taught in a secondary school for three years. She was under contract to the Malaysian government to teach for five years in government schools after completing her teaching degree, due to a special financial grant she had received to go to college. After a third year of teaching, she was able to go to England to study for one year in the field of library science. She returned to Malaysia to fulfill her

remaining two years of required service in the secondary school. An opportunity then arose for Sue to attend the university to acquire a graduate degree. She currently teaches at the university.

Educators employed by the university since 1973-74 have been considered as part of a quasi-governmental body and are paid equally regardless of sex. In all official faculty meetings Bahasa Malay must be used, however, since most of the faculty were educated in an era in which English was spoken, they speak primarily English among themselves.

In Malaysia, Chinese continue to marry Chinese. All of Sue's brothers and sisters married other Chinese with the exception of the second brother who married a Swiss. Sue's mother objected to this, but relented. Neither Sue's marriage nor any of the marriages of her siblings were arranged. She knew her husband before they were married, and while they were not chosen for one another by their parents, they still went through the formality of a go-between. Though she is a Christian, Sue's sense of duty is still very strong. She had a traditional engagement. At the wedding she observed the tea ceremony which signified her being accepted by her husband's family. She indicated that very few Chinese in Southeast Asia today have arranged marriages.

Sue noted that husbands today are beginning to share in household responsibilities. For example, they help the children with homework. She helps her children with English and science and her husband helps them with their Chinese and math. Sue and her husband attend social functions together. They also do marketing together and visit their parents together. "It is common today for husbands to share chores and to take responsibility when the wife is working."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

These reflections about life for Chinese women today may be utilized to compare the challenges faced by minority women everywhere. In some respects, Chinese women today act as agents for perpetuating tradition, in other areas they act as a force for change. Some determinants of this dimension are historical and objective; others are the results of subjective emotions and decisions by individual women. In the first category, for example, are the influx of women in Singapore into the middle echelons of government service following the introduction of compulsory military service for males. The unavailability of young men of recruitable age has given women of the same age an advantage in obtaining access to government jobs. The effect of women in middle-echelon positions is beginning to be felt in government decision making. In the second category is the large role still played by women in the maintenance and perpetuation of religious observances. However, younger women are now less inclined than their mothers to visit temples or continue other religious formalities.

Another area of change experienced by women is higher educational achievement. Daughters of working mothers with a high school education or less are being encouraged to attend college. Parents are making financial sacrifices so that their children can attain more education.

Contemporary Chinese women no longer expect to marry through the efforts of matchmakers using horoscopes, unlike their mothers and grandmothers. Marriage to non-Chinese is an obvious departure from Chinese tradition. Conversion to Christianity is another. The proportion of Christians among the ethnic Chinese in areas studied is highest in Singapore and lowest in

Thailand. In Thailand, Buddhism is part of the pattern of assimilation as well as an element of Chinese tradition.

Travel abroad is another common aspiration among Chinese women that contributes to a departure from tradition. Young working women frequently report they are saving money for travel. The proportion of women who have had some schooling in England, Hong Kong, or elsewhere is high, even in the service professions.

Cultural and emotional ties with the People's Republic of China among the women interviewed became weaker after 1949; and although Southeast Asians do visit China, the bond today is more intellectual than emotional. Some teachers in Chinese schools in Kuala Lumpur attempted to promote "Mao consciousness" but primarily as a means of expressing resistance to the Bumiputra policy of the Malaysian government.

Another force for change and exposure to new ideas is television, newspapers, and other media.

In the economic sphere, women have been influencing change through increased participation in the economy, especially during the last ten years. Women more than men have changed the structure of the work force in the post-war years. Women may feel more strongly the schizoid dual identity that ethnic Chinese experience abroad.

The Chinese women interviewed expressed clear vocational goals, even when they had little formal education. This is certainly a transition period for women as they respond to and act upon their changing society. Changes are not consistent for each country. In Singapore, there is evidence that Western and Christian influences on women, particularly in regard to identity

and self image, has been as great or greater than the influence of the Malay.

Singapore's survival is dependent upon its ability to maintain its economic status as a world trade center. This makes it truly a cosmopolitan city-country. Being exposed to both the eastern and western worlds provides an opportunity for Singapore's women to see themselves in numerous economic and social roles.

In Malaysia, where Chinese are the significant minority, the influence of the Malay is greater than in Singapore, particularly in language. Education, highly valued by the Chinese, is also more readily available to Malays through special government scholarships. There is resistance among the Chinese to fully integrate with other Southeast Asians in Malaysia. Thus, Chinese women in Malaysia feel discrimination.

In Thailand where the Chinese are a very small minority, full assimilation has occurred. Perhaps the fact that physical and historical differences between Chinese and Thai are not as great as the differences between Chinese and Malay has made inter-marriage and acculteration more acceptable. Or perhaps because the Chinese were so few, the means of survival called for becoming Thai.

Change is also apparent between generations. Older women focus more on their role and image as daughter, wife, and mother. By contrast, younger women are adapting to the rapidly changing world of Southeast Asia. They see themselves able to make choices; it is even becoming acceptable to have a career that does not include a husband and children. Economic independence is allowing women to act upon their environment and to make

decisions about the direction of their lives. They no longer need to maintain unacceptable marriage relationships; they believe strongly: "one husband, one wife."

Women are less dependent, struggling for equality, purpose, and feelings of self worth and dignity. They are not content to be docile, feeling the pressures and stresses of change, industrilization, and discrimination. They are finding ways to cope successfully with these pressures.

Changes are evident in historical, traditional, and religious precepts and practices. Women are no longer content to live in the past and look toward the future as they acquire higher levels of education and more varied life experiences. They hold rising expectations and aspirations.

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